



## **COVID-19 Close/Casual Contact Notification Protocols**

As part of its emergency preparedness efforts in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the NJ Department of Children and Families' (DCF) leadership has developed a notification process to ensure that staff is advised appropriately if they may have had contact in the office with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or someone who is directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine due to potential exposure to or diagnosis with COVID-19. Our work has been guided by recommendations from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the NJ Department of Health and the Civil Service Commission.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you have been directed by a medical professional or government agency to self-isolate or quarantine because there is a suspicion that you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you should immediately notify DCF's Office of Human Resources at [DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov](mailto:DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov) or (609) 888-7851 or (609) 888-7240.

This is an important step. Central Office staff including representatives from the Office of Human Resources (OHR), the Office of Employee Relations, the DCF Office of Emergency Management (DCFOEM) and the Office of Facilities and Support Services (OFSS) are working together to, as quickly as possible, confirm facts and coordinate the appropriate response. This includes notifying affected staff.

During this process, OHR staff will ask a series of questions related to date(s) the employee was last in the office, where he or she was in the office and with whom he or she may have come into contact. The DCFOEM will also contact the relevant local health department and/or the NJ Department of Health to obtain additional guidance.

Staff who have been in close or casual contact with an employee that has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis will receive notice from OHR. Please note that the CDC distinguishes between close and casual contact as follows:

- Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (approximately 10 minutes or more) or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on).

- Casual contact is defined as being in the same indoor environment, like an office or a classroom, with a symptomatic or confirmed COVID-19 case. Anyone who has had casual contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case is considered “low risk”. No special precautions other than what is generally suggested, like social distancing and frequent hand washing, would be recommended.

The OHR will also notify DCF leadership, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, the Chief of Staff, and the Cost Center Manager. DCF Leadership will determine whether to close an office, redeploy staff, forward telephone lines and/or equipment in consultation with the OFSS.

In addition, as part of DCF’s response and preparedness efforts, the OFSS has contracted with a cleaning service to perform a deep cleaning of every DCF office location. In addition, OFSS will, upon receiving a confirmation that a DCF staff member has been recently diagnosed with COVID-19, make immediate arrangements with the Department of Treasury to have that staff person’s office location deep cleaned. If the employee was utilizing a state vehicle, that will be deep cleaned as well. Depending upon the building, staff may be asked to vacate the premises to facilitate the cleaning process.

### **How Can You Protect Yourself?**

- The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recently recommended](#) that people use cloth face coverings, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.
- When you leave home and when you are in the office, follow **social distancing** practices: put **at least 6 feet between yourself and other people**. This is especially important for [people who are at higher risk of getting very sick](#).
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Stay home** if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.

### **What if I am Experiencing Symptoms?**

If you are currently experiencing symptoms that you believe could be COVID-19 related (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath), please immediately contact your personal medical provider for advice.

- It is also important that you notify any medical provider of your potential exposure to the virus before visiting them in person.
- Please also alert the Office of Human Resources at [DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov](mailto:DCF.HumanResources@dcf.nj.gov) or (609) 888-7851 or (609) 888-7240. The numbers will be staffed from 9:00 – 4:00 daily.

### **Where Can I find More Information?**

- For questions related to COVID-19, please refer to the state's [COVID-19](#) information hub.
- For questions related to COVID-29, please refer to these [Frequently Asked Questions](#) issued by the New Jersey Department of Health.
- There is also a wealth of information on the CDC website about [preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities](#) and what to know if you have had [direct contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- If you or members of your family are struggling, please check out the [many resources available](#) for assistance.

**Our guidance is: If you are not feeling well, please stay home and consult with your healthcare provider.** We all need to take this guidance very seriously. Consult with your healthcare provider and stay at home until you receive approval to return to work. Please update the Office of Human Resources accordingly.